



Project Recovery Iowa

DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES

It's been Six Months Since the Tornado - So Why Are There Still So Many Problems

Phases of Disaster Recovery

- **Heroic Phase** - This period usually occurs during the disaster and immediately afterwards. People are called upon and respond to demands for heroic action and save their own and others' lives and property. They expend a great deal of energy helping others survive and recover. There are countless examples of courage, generosity, and support. People focus on the immediate needs of those who are in danger.
- **Honeymoon Phase** - This period typically begins one week after the disaster and can last six months. Those who have survived have a strong sense of having shared and lived through a catastrophic experience with others. People feel supported and encouraged by official agencies that promise assistance. The cleanup process begins with anticipation that more help will be available.
- **Disillusionment Phase** - This period may last from two months to two or more years. If promises of aid are not fulfilled as expected, strong feelings of anger, resentment, and bitterness may occur. Outside agencies need to leave and local community groups may weaken. There may be a gradual loss of the "shared community" as victims concentrate on rebuilding on their own. People may feel isolated and communities may become divided and hostile.
- **Reconstruction Phase** - This phase generally last for several years following the disaster. Victims have come to realize that they need to rebuild their own lives, homes, and businesses with little assistance from others. They have gradually assumed responsibility for the tasks. Signs of progress are evident, with new buildings, construction projects, and new programs and plans. These all reaffirm people's belief in their community and their own capabilities. Community groups with long-term investment in the community become key elements during this phase.



Adopted from *A Flood of Emotions*, Kansas State University, 1993.